DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 224 233 EC 150 616

AUTHOR Biklen, Douglas; Searl, Stanford J., Jr.

TITLE Parent Involvement: A Practical Guide about How to Involve Parents of Children with Disabilities in the Public Schools.

INSTITUTION Syracuse Univ., NY. Special Education Resource Center.

SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.; Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE [81]
CONTRACT 300-80-0723
NOTE 29p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Advocacy; Compliance (Legal); *Disabilities; Elementary Secondary Education; *Parent Participation; *Parent Role; *Parent School Relationship

ABSTRACT

It is important that both parents of handicapped children and the schools serving them initiate efforts to enhance the parent-school partnership. Despite the greater parental role mandated by P.L. 94-142, the Education For All Handicapped Children Act, many parents of handicapped children still face frustration and noncooperatiion in their dealings with the public schools. Confrontations with the schools may result in feelings of isolation, resentment, and powerlessnss. Parents, however, have vital informatiion that school personnel can use in programing, such as knowledge about their child's unique communication methods, activity or food preferences, and behavior. Parents can assume advocacy roles if they are prepared and work together. Parent involvement initiated by the schools can become more meaningful through practical strategies involving parent input in Individualized Education Programs, use of parent/professional advisory boards, a wider range of parent groups, use of parents as teachers, a framework in which parents help other parents, and the use of parents in program evaluation. (CL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED224233

PARENT INVOLVEMENT: A PRACTICAL GUIDE ABOUT HOW TO INVOLVE PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Douglas Biklen
and
Stanford J. Searl, Jr.

Syracuse University
Room 400
Huntington Hall
150 Marshall Street
Syracuse, New York 13210

This article was supported in part by a contract (#300-80-0723) from the U.S. Office of Special Education to the Special Education Resource Center at Syracuse University and by a grant (#3532413) from the National Institute of Education. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and no official endorsement by them should be inferred.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Peggy Switzer

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EC150 616

Part I. Parent Involvement Initiated by Parents

Introduction

How much involvement should parents have? How do parents feel and what can they do? Is there an alternative to the parent/professional confrontations that some professionals fear? How should schools respond? What are parents saying about the years ahead? Is there a new role for parents? And, if parent involvement is going to occur, in one form or another, what will it yield? Will it improve or hurt public education? Can schools and parents minimize the need for confrontation? Or, is confrontation good? These are some of the questions which swirl around the parent involvement controversy.

In a survey of parents' experiences with Public Law 94-142, Brightman and Sullivan called parental involvement "the clearest impact of P.L. 94-142." They gave an encouraging account. By their own report, those parents who participated in the survey have acted more and have believed themselves to have accomplished more on behalf of their disabled children, than was the case prior to the legislation. In addition, as a result of the law's mandated participation for parents, many parents reported that they think more optimistically about their children, about their children's potential in the larger society, and more broadly about their own possibilities as parents to help realize that potential.

Yet, in spite of such gains as cited by Brightman and Sullivan, confrontations between parents and schools continue to

occur. Increasingly, parents have begun to know their rights and exercise them. Tom Gilhool, an attorney in the PARC (Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens v. the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania) case, recalled the experience of one family the case had been settled:

> One of the plaintiffs, a child and her parents, were visited by a school official...(who) said, "We have the order. Tell you what, we're going to give Kate another chance." The parents said, and you'll excuse me for translating it, "No, you're not going to give Kate another chance. You're going to give Kate that to which she is entitled.'

Such confrontations do reveal a new relationship between some parents and some public schools. Parents, advocates and others may view these changes as an exciting transformation; others, such as some school officials, teacher educators and some state and federal policy makers may feel uncomfortable and anxious about confrontation and demands about rights. Can these confrontations be managed productively? Can such potential confrontations be avoided altogether? What roles can parents play in the process of educating their children, particularly those children with a disability? What roles can schools play to involve parents in the education of children with disabilities?

Understanding Parents:

Evidence from parent narratives and elsewhere indicates that many parents have struggled with a key recognition: children with disabilities have not been valued by American society. The history of "education" for children with disabilities illustrates the nature of social prejudice: children were excluded from schools, placed in total institutional settings and, in general, isolated from and discarded by society. In part, these facts of

social exclusion, segregation and isolation have continued to be a burden to many parents.

Even today, some parents may be subjected to the old, tired, inaccurate and now illegal refrains:

"There's nothing to be done for her";

"I'm sorry to have so say this...your son is retarded" (with the underlying message that it is hopeless);

"The right place for your child is in the institution";

"But we don't have that kind of program here";

"or, there may be newer variations upon the old refrains:

"We agree that your child needs services, but you'll have to wait" (until she's two or three or four or five, etc);

"We'll have a program as soon as there are at least (blank) (i.e. 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 or 7 or 8 or 9 or 10, etc.) people on the waiting list";

"There aren't any appropriate places for your child in the regular fifth grade; we do have a special school with all the therapies, however";

"you must realize the special attention that your child needs; it would be too disruptive of his program in an age-appropriate regular class".

The point is that many parents must continue to struggle, whether over the need for appropriation programs, real vocational options, a realization of a truly least restrictive environment and other needed services.

Given labels, given classification, given funding for school and work programs determined by such categories as severely

mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, learning disabled and so forth, parents may have learned that their children were not valued. Some may not survive these social and emotional wounds. Yet, for better or for worse, many parents continue to be "involved" if only to learn to cope with the social frustrations and disappointments.

Parents have had a lot of sorting out to do; they have struggled to educate themselves about their feelings and the issues. For example, Betty Pieper reflected one broader dimension of parent "involvement"; she attempted to understand what was happening to her:

> Finally I got it straightened around in my head as I washed my dishes and cooked supper: perhaps private charity should be fighting to get our children into public schools instead of building large empires increasing their vested interests and rigidity. No matter how uncomfortable or embarrassed I felt at any one given moment, I was learning to stick it out and to listen carefully to people's shock and to the things it told me about their attitudes, so that I would best know how to counter the situation when it arose again.
> (Elizabeth Pieper, Sticks and Stones)

Some parents have educated themselves about social stigma; they have understood the depth of social prejudice and fear about children who are called autistic, mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed. For example, Josh Greenfeld gave the following account of the labels used about his son, Noah: "We'd been told he was mentally retarded; emotionally disturbed; autistic; schizophrenic; possibly brain-damaged.....But we finally discovered that the diagnosis didn't seem to matter; it was all so sadly academic...For though we live in one of the richest states in the nation, there was no singly viable treatment

immediately available for Noah, no matter what category he could eventually be assigned to." (A Child Called Noah, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970, 1972, pp. 4-5).

Many parents reported feeling exploited, isolated, ill informed, and basically ineffective in making their concerns, questions, and suggestions known to teachers and school administrators. In her book Unraveling the Special Education Maze, parent activist Barbara Cutler describes one aspect about the nature and origin of these feelings. The problem came in part from the parents' experiences with schools as children themselves and with the administrative practices toward them as adults:

> Most parents stand in awe of school people and systems because schools represent our childhood images of authority and mystifying expertise. We are all products of school systems and we still retain a number of childlike school behaviors based on the old rules: "Stand in Line," "No gum chewing," "No talking out of turn."
>
> The school building brings out these old feelings and behaviors in practically everyone who doesn't work in a school. School people who feel most secure in authoritarian roles tend to exploit this habitual response to shore up their status with almost everyone who is not a regular part of the system. They may use a commanding tone of voice, keep people waiting in the outer office or halls, require silence as you walk the corridors, and generally treat parents as children and intruders. They make it clear that everyone in the building has a particular place, and the parent's place is that of a child.

Parents As Potential Experts

Undoubtedly, some parents will continue to feel isolated, timid, resentful, and relatively powerless when it comes to dealing with schools. People in schools hold professional degrees, many parents do not. People in schools know and can refer to rules, regulations, and standard operating procedure. People in schools generally have more access to officials in the education system than do parents. Yet, in spite of these potential barriers to meaningful involvement, many parents believe that they can have an impact upon what happens to their children in schools.

In a broad sense, involvement might have a series of meanings for parents; if involved, parents might

* reaffirm an important role in child rearing;
* learn about and influence what happens to their children in school;
* help to design their children's programs (usually through the individual education plan);
* share knowledge about their children with the school;
* monitor the school's program for their child.

When it comes of parents of children with disabilities, there are special stakes: whether consciously or not, for better or worse, parents do teach their children. While professionals may have more information about specific disabilities and teaching strategies, they do not spend as much time with the children they serve as do many parents. Thus, parents may know more about the unique, individual experiences and abilities of

children than some professionals. In a broader context, many parents have the ability to become experts about their child's needs and strengths. Parents are potential experts about their children and may possess key information about the appropriate education of their child with disabilities.

For example, a child may prefer distinctive foods, communicate in unusual ways, express preferences individually or perform any number of behaviors which may be misinterpreted. In one case of a child with autism, a boy had little language yet could read. His parents talked to the teacher; on the basis of the parents' knowledge and information, the teacher prepared written instruction for the child. Such written instruction provided structure for the child's day; the parents reported that as the child would complete one sequence of activities, he would (often with some prompting) return to his "mailbox" for more instructions.

Simple things such as holding and positioning can mean a great deal for the education of a particular child. Again, parents have the information,; they have the potential to be vital resources about how to handle their children. For instance, there was a case of a student who had severe cerebral palsy. The condition affected muscular control; thus, it mattered very much how his teachers and aides held him. If held in what was for him an uncomfortable position, he might cry or whimper. The child's parents spent time each year with his new teachers and aides and instructed them about how their child liked to be positioned and held.

Because they have spent so much time with their child, many parents may possess a sense of the child beyond labels or categories. One parent testified: "She's just Susie -- my child has become part of us. You can't really know about Susie by calling her severely retarded." Yet, most teachers and other educators (as well as most parents) have learned a special language about disabilities. There are expectations and built-in perceptions about what a "severely handicapped" or "autistic" or "emotionally disturbed" child can and cannot do. Of course, as with all labels and assumptions, such a language of special disabilities may not bring one closer to the reality. Within the context of the day-to-day handling of and being with one's child, labels and classifications may not explain much; yet, the jargon and expectations connected with labels accompany both child and parent to school.

Strategies for Change

Parents have the potential to become powerful agents of change. Parents can wage battles that professionals -- whether administrators, teachers or other educators -- cannot. As allies to progressive educators, parents have potential to move and change bureaucracies. For example, parents and advocacy groups have helped to initiate many of the landmark lawsuits from PARC v. Pennsylvania to Wyatt v. Stickney to Willowbrook and beyond. Historically, parents have been leaders in bringing about change.

While professionals started the first special education programs in America, it was parents, mainly in the 1950's and 1960's who caused those programs to proliferate. Through parent and parent/professional organizations like the National Association for Retarded Children, the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, and the National Society for Autistic Children, parents created private schools and put pressure on states and local school districts to create public school programs for their respective children. And it was parents who first moved to use litigation, much as parents of black children had done before them, to establish the right to public education, the right to comprehensive, appropriate education.

Within the preceding context of parent activism, commentators have noted that many parents have employed common yet effective strategies. Barbara Cutler and other parent advocates offer similar lists of preparatory strategies:

1. Know your rights. Few things have changed the landscape of education and special education so much as the knowledge that education is a right and not a privilege. Parents need to know all the specific aspects of public law 94-142, the education for All Handicapped Children Act as well as their state's special education law.

2. Raise Consciousness. Most parents find that they increase their own ability to understand their own experiences and to act on them when they learn that they are not alone, that others have experienced many of the same frustrations, and that they have allies.

3. Work with Parent Advocacy Groups. Most parents, whether or not they have a child with a disability, find it hard to act alone. Consequently parents have developed parent advocacy groups and networks to support individual parent advocacy and to apply pressure for change at a systems level.

4. Know basic information about disabilities and special education. A basic principle behind all consumer movements is that consumers who know something about what they need and what is or should be available make effective consumers. It helps to have a working knowledge of disabilities and key concepts in special education. Not surprisingly, then, parents of newly identified children turn to parents of older disabled children, as well as professional advocates and consultants for this information.

5. Learn basic advocacy skills. Letter writing, public education, telephoning, negotiating, assertiveness skills, lobbying, monitoring, and public relations work.

6. Define the issues. In order to secure what you want, you first must define it, carefully, succinctly, and in practical terms. What are your top problems? Are they easily understood? How much are you willing to compromise?

7. Develop a plan of action. Change does not happen overnight; rather change occurs slowly, in stages. As most of the parent advocacy books suggest, parents who succeed are those who are committed to effective involvement over the long years, usually 16 or so, in which their children attend public school. It helps in long range strategies, as well as immediate crisis.

Parent involvement typifies what has come to be called "consumerism". Consumers want to know more about their own needs, the available services or products to meet those needs, the quality of those services and products, and strategies for getting them. In addition, the parents consumer movement poses difficult questions to professionals. Parents want professionals to explain their thoughts and actions. They want not only answers; they want dialogue.

In the tradition of consumer movements, parents of children with disabilities employ a diverse range of community organizing strategies. One deaf education program in the regular schools came into being as a result of eighteen months of parent organizing. The parents invited a national leader in deaf education to come and talk about how to create quality programming for deaf students. The parents collaborated with the school district in this event. Then parents began documenting how much money the county was spending on transporting their children to residential schools. Parents wrote letters to the editor. Eventually the parents and school officials joined in planning public school programs.

Another group of parents decided they could improve the overall quality of educational services by comparing the types of services offered by each of eighteen school districts in a metropolitan area and asking school officials to upgrade program gaps. The parents secured statistics from the State Education Department on the numbers and types of programs. They then compared this information with the total number of school aged

children and children with special needs in each district. Next, they drew graphs representing the patterns of special education services in each district (i.e. number of students identified by each disability, number of students served in self contained special classes, number of students in resource programs, number of students mainstreamed, amount of related services available, number of students sent out of district for services). With this information, parents could call for program development in specific areas. Their concerns about programs were no longer vague feelings that "our district does not seem to offer much in this area of instruction". They had data.

In 1971, a group of parents of severely handicapped youngsters wanted the State of North Carolina to develop a statewide system of services for their children. The parents held a breakfast meeting in a Raleigh church building to which they invited state legislators. About a third of those invited came. Dr. Eric Schopler, an expert in the education of children with autism, and about fifteen parents attended. The parents brought their children along with them so that the legislators could see, first hand, children with autism. The strategy worked. The legislators passed legislation establishing Division TEACCH, a statewide system for serving all autistic children in the state. The majority of those services are provided in regular public schools.

Parents in another state decided to lobby for vocational and independent living programs in the public schools. Actually, their school district already operated elaborate vocational

training programs, but none which served severely disabled students and few which integrated moderately and mildly disabled students. The parents visited model programs in the area, talked with noted national leaders, read about additional models and then called for establishment of a county wide task force on vocational and independent living programming. The parents who became most active were those whose children were deemed ineligible for existing services or who were placed on waiting lists for programs.

It is too early yet to see results from their efforts, but in some schools, staff are showing greater attention to using functional curricula (i.e. teaching/learning activities that relate to independent living and working needs) in the overall educational program. As one principal noted, "We now know more of the right questions to ask. Just yesterday we had a case conference on one of our students. We kept pressing ourselves, 'What does functional mean for Jimmy.' After talking with his family, we realized that one thing he needed was to learn to relax and to be able to keep quiet during a movie for example. So we are planning to take him into public places more, and to some movies. That is really functional in terms of him living with his family."

Part II: PARENT INVOLVEMENT INITIATED BY SCHOOLS

For the schools themselves, parent involvement makes sense, also. With thoughtful preparation about the possible roles which parents can play, some of the mistrust, hostility and confrontation between schools and parents may be lessened. Schools might think about those roles played by the parents of non-disabled children; typically, parents might be:

* members of parent-teacher associations;
* coaches or advisors;
* aides for field trips;
* consultants;
* teacher aides;
* task force participants for program development;
* agents of community education;
* educators of their own children at home and in the community;
* co-teachers.

As with parents themselves, school administrators and teachers have much at stake when it comes to systematic and meaningful parent involvement: if parents are welcomed by the school, if parents are perceived as helpful, potential allies, if they are perceived as unique experts when it comes to gathering data about their children, if the schools can begin to accept parents as potential partners in education, then the confrontations and struggles between parents and schools will be lessened. If school leaders do not really <u>believe</u> in the value of parent involvement, it will become transparent. Many parents

have echoed the following comment: "If only the teacher would initiate more contacts."

The assumption is this: if parent involvement can be approached systematically and meaningfully by the schools, then such increased parent activism may lead to less confrontation and better education.

But how can schools and teachers promote meaningful parent involvement?

* Solicit parent contributions to important decisions which affect both individual programs and children;
* Respect the individuality of parents; do not promote only routine roles for them;
* Treat parents as important, valued resources both for their own children's programs and for the school as a whole;
* Demonstrate the school's ability to change as a result of parent criticisms;
* Recognize and appreciate that parents want to see their children learn and develop;
* Encourage parents as allies and change agents.

Practical Strategies:

Parents and Individual Education Programs. Public Law 94-142 mandates that parents shall be informed of their right to participate with the teaching staff to develop their children's educational program. The educational value of parent involvement here is great:

1. Staff and parents can share information, expectations and hypotheses;

2. The IEP gathers basic information about a child's current level of functioning, information that parents often have lots of;

3. It includes annual goals for a particular child, stated in observable terms (i.e. Jane will read at the second grade level);

4. The IEP describes means of evaluating child progress; parents can do some of the evaluating;

5. It states the duration and location of programming;

6. The IEP describes the general methods of instruction. the IEP meeting helps parents become aware of teaching strategies and thus better able to supplement at home;

7. It describes the amount of integration a child will have with non-disabled children;

8. The IEP describes the related services which are needed, (i.e. speech therapy, physical therapy).

In North Carolina, staff of the innovative autism program, Division TEACCH, interview families to gather information about a range of subjects such as: a. abilities of the children, b. behaviors which might be disruptive or difficult for family life, c. behaviors which the family believes would bring greater integration of the child into community life, such as particular abilities including the ability to cross a street or to accomplish self-toileting, d. vocational opportunities in the community for which the child/youth might be trained. All of

these concerns can become part of the IEP and/or part of the instruction.

Parent/Professional Advisory Boards.

One schools has a parent/professional advisory board which assists the administration in general problem solving and the hiring of staff. This advisory role encompasses a wide range of qualities which promote meaningful parent involvement, including the treatment of parents as important, valued resources and a demonstrated willingness to modify the decision-making process on the basis of parent knowledge and experience.

In Madison, Wisconsin, parents and professionals join together to form task forces to promote services for children and youth with severe disabilities. At another school, a parent and professional task force engages in community education. This group explains the integrated school approach to parents and administrators in other schools. In effect, the task force assists other schools in program development. In Syracuse, New York, parents formed special task forces to promote the development of vocational programs, residential alternatives to institutions and programs for children with severe disabilities. In Vermont, a series of regional task forces were formed to ensure timely, effective strategies for integration of children with severe disabilities into public school settings.

More Types of Parent Groups.

A school we recently visited had three parent organizations. One parent group for parents of children with disabilities, the purpose of which is to provide parents a forum for consciousness

raising and skills development. This group frequently has speakers come in to talk about specific teaching strategies. Also, parents take turns sharing their own strategies at parenting.

Another group involves parents of disabled and non-disabled children. This group, open to all, is mainly a social group, although it also provides a means for the staff to communicate to the entire parent constituency about major new developments at the school.

A third group is for single parents only. The single parents meet to give each other support and to share strategies of coping as single parents.

Parents as Teachers.

Division TEACCH in North Carolina calls parents co-teachers. The staff invites parents to observe a staff member working with the child or youth. The parent then attempts the teaching exercise. Sometimes, the staff videotapes these training exercises so that parents can observe their own teaching.

At the Jowonio school, in Syracuse, New York, "parent workers" meet regularly with the teachers. These parent workers then visit the families and assist them in how to carry out aspects of the curriculum with their children. In some instances the parent worker assists the parents in developing a particular teaching strategy to deal with a problem behavior such as screaming, inability to sleep through the night, or repetitive use of language.

More and more, educators have formally recognized the great potential of parents to educate their children. And, recently, they have produced quality manuals for us all, parents and professional educators alike. One popular series is Steps to Independence by Dr. Bruce Baker and others, available for Research Press Box 317750, Champaign, Illinois 61820. There are many other such programs.

Learning from Parents.

One parent of a child with severe cerebral palsy told us that her child was aware of all language used around him. School officials found this hard to believe until they went to the child's home and performed picture vocabulary tests with him. The results confirmed the parent's assessment. The child was operating four full grade levels beyond the norm. Had there not been good parent involvement in that situation, the child would have undoubtedly received an inappropriate program.

Parent to Parent Program.

Some school districts encourage the "old timer" parents to assist in "up and coming" parents. Young parents have always learned from older parents who have "already been through the system". It is no different for parents of children with disabilities. If anything, parents of children with disabilities have a greater need to "learn the ropes" as fast as they can from other parents. Some schools have taken the attitude that an informed consumer is a good consumer. They have provided new parents with lists of parent organizations and support networks. Such groups provide parents practical information on available

services. Some provide mainly emotional support. Others specialize in helping parents understand the various human service bureaucracies. Some warn parents about what they should be planning for (i.e. ask for pre-vocational training by age eight; make sure your child is getting real social integration) and some provide advocacy services. One such model program, The Parent Advocacy Network, lines up parents with each other so that when parents go for their child's annual care conference, they have a parent consultant assisting them in preparing, in knowing their rights, and in considering the available options.

Schools as Service Centers.

Who has not heard the complaint, "You can't expect schools to be everything for every person. Our job is to educate, not to provide psychotherapy, not to be a drug center, etcetera, etcetera." Yet, people do look to the school for more than 9-2:30 education. They expect schools to offer adult education, after school recreation and other extra curricular activities, a meeting place for official and unofficial events. In short, people see schools as a community resource. With only minimal staff time --- many schools enlist community volunteers to do it all --- schools can act as information exchange centers, community bulletin boards, locations for community activities and school initiated extra curricular activities (i.e. swimming instructions, basketball leagues, cooking clubs, creative writing groups), parent training programs, and meeting places for self help groups. Such activities, whether formed on special

education issues or not, give parents ways to meet each other and share experiences and assistance.

Parent Evaluators.

Parents can and must become involved in on-going evaluation of their children's education programs and keep the teachers informed of developments on the home front. This kind of informational exchange is essential to children's progress. The Jowonio School, a unique school which integrates severely disabled and non-disabled children at the classroom level, uses children's lunchboxes as mailboxes for notebooks in which the parents and teachers correspond about interesting experiences of the child, child change information, and other relevant information.

At a school which integrates multiply handicapped and non-disabled children, parents of the non-disabled children have taken to regularly informing the principal of "how good this is" for their typical children. The principal recently remarked, "We couldn't stop integrating if we wanted to; the parents of the regular kids wouldn't allow us!"

Parent Allies.

In Albuquerque, New Mexico, parents played a key role in establishing the district's "side by side" program. Albuquerque serves all but three of its children with disabilities. As one administrator explained it to us, "The influence of the parents cannot be stressed enough. They pushed and they pushed until they got what they wanted." The side by side program began in elementary schools with the placement of special classes for

severely disabled students in elementary schools. Once the parents had experienced successful integration there, they demanded no less in the middle schools and high school. The Albuquerque administrators seized parent involvement as an opportunity rather than a barrier to creating quality services district wide. Here is how they did it:

> Albuquerque Public Schools decided to integrate its program at the secondary level and, hence, close the segregated school during the 1977-78 school year. After canvassing a number of high schools, a receptive principal and administration for an integrated program was found. The public school system held a series of community meetings to explain its plans. One administrator recalled, "We made guarantees to parents that if integration did not work out, we would go back to the segregated school."
>
> Opposition to the plans was fierce from parents of children at the segregated school. Albuquerque has many of the same problems as any large urban school system. Many parents were concerned about their children's safety at the high school. Others feared that their children's programs would be diluted. Some special education teachers also expressed fears about regular high school students and "drugs, sex and violence."
>
> Fighting the closing of the segregated school, a group of parents appealed the school district's decision to the federal office of Civil Rights. Their appeal was unsuccessful. These parents next prepared to wage a court battle against the closing. In preparation for litigation, they started collecting donations for a legal defense fund.
>
> The high school was integrated and the segregated school closed on schedule. By the end of the first year, parents originally opposed to the program had become strong supporters. The parent group organizing the legal defense fund donated to the high school thousands of dollars initially collected to right integration. To date, there has not been a single major negative incident involving severely handicapped and regular students at the high school. The segregated facility was sold to a private technical vocational institute.

In this case, the school district's strategy was to keep up on-going dialogue with parents, even in times of great hostility. Moreover, the district negotiated with parents. It made guarantees if its plan failed. And, perhaps most important, it encourages parents of disabled and non-disabled students; parent and school newsletters describe the programs and their effects, the schools encourage parents to visit the classrooms and parents of both disabled and non-disabled students assist on field trips.

A CONCLUDING NOTE

In describing how parents and schools can initiate parent involvement we have drawn on actual examples which we have observed during the course of implementing a federal research project and federal technical assistance contract. These examples in no way exhaust those we have seen. Nor are they in any way unusual. Rather, we believe they typify the kinds of matter-of-fact ways in which parents and schools can work together. Moreover, they clearly demonstrate the excellent effects of meaningful parent involvement, both for individual children, for program development and for the schools.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The following people have contributed numerous ideas and comments:

Barbara Cutler, Gunnar Dybwad, Dianne Ferguson, Suzanne Gilmour, Deborah Olson, Hillery Schneiderman, Parnel Wickham-Searl.

The authors thank the preceding people; the responsibility for the final product remains the authors.

RESOURCES

PARENT ACCOUNTS

Among many moving, informative parent accounts, see the following:

1. Josh Greenfeld, A Child Called Noah, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972.

2. Josh Greenfeld, A Place for Noah, New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1978.

3. Helen Featherstone, A Difference in the Family, New York: Basic Books, 1980.

4. Barry N. Kaufman, Son Rise, New York: Harper and Row, 1976.

5. Robert and Suzanne Massie, Journey, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975.

6. Lotte Moise, Up We Grew with Barbara, Minneapolis, Minnesota: Dillon Press, 1980.

7. Claira Claiborne Parks, The Siege, Boston: Little-Brown, 1974.

8. Elizabeth Pieper, Sticks and Stones, Syracuse, New York: Human Policy Press, 1977.

9. Stanford J. Searl, "Stages of Parent Reaction" Exceptional Parent, April, 1978.

TOOLS FOR ORGANIZING

1. Douglas Biklen, Let Our Children Go, Syracuse: Human Policy Press, 1974.

2. Barbara Coyne Cutler, Unraveling the Special Education Maze, Champaign, Ill.: Research Press, 1981.

3. Charlotte Des Jardins, How to Organize an Effective Parent Group and Move Bureaucracies, Chicago: Coordinating Council for Handicapped Children, 407 S. Dearborn, Chicago, Ill.

4. Reed Martin, Educating Handicapped Children: The Legal Mandate, Champaign, Ill.: Research Press, 1979.

5. Steven Taylor and Douglas Biklen, Understanding the Law, Syracuse, N.Y. Human Policy Press, 1980.

PARENTS AS EDUCATORS

Bruce L. Baker, et at. Steps to Independence, Champaign, Ill.: Research Press, 1976, 1977, 1978.

Ann P. Turnbull, Bonnie B. Strickland, and John C. Brantley, Developing and Implementing Individualized Education Programs, Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1978.

RATIONALE FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT

1. Alan J. Brightman and Mary Beth Sullivan, Impact of Public Law 94-142 on Parents of Disabled Children, Belmont, MA: the Cambridge Workshop, Inc., p. 30.

2. Thomas Gilhool, "Education: An Incredible Right", Exceptional Children, May, 1973, p. 608.

3. Lisbeth J. Vincent, Sherry Laten, Christine Salisbury, Pansy Brown, and Diane Baumgart, Family Involvement in the Educational Process of Severely Handicapped Students: "State of the Art and Directions for the Future" in Barbara Wilcox and Robert York (Eds.) Quality Education for the Severely Handicapped: The Federal Investment. Washington, D.C.,: U.S. Dept. of Education, Nov., 1980, pp. 134-179.

4. Robert Perske, Mental Retardation: The Leading Edge, Washington, D.C.: President's Committee on Mental Retardation, 1979.

PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES: STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

For practical suggestions about how to provide an effective, supported least restrictive environment for children with severe disabilities, see the following documents produced by the Special Education Resource Center at Syracuse:

"The Least Restrictive Environment: It's Application to Education"--Douglas Biklen

Traces the historical, legal, professional, and socio-political development of the LRE principle. Reviews the recent research and experience with integrated schooling and identifies the key factors which can facilitate or impede integration.

"Public Education For Children With Severe, Profound, and Multiple Disabilities: Least Restrictive Environment" --Douglas Biklen

Answers the questions Why? Where? and How? to integrate all students with disabilities, especially those with severe/multiple disabilities. Masters all the arguments for integration for integration and concludes that quality integrated schooling makes sense and is working.

"Traditional Barriers to Education Opportunity: Unserved/Underserved Children And Young People In Special Education"
--Steven J. Taylor and Staff

Presents the concept that traditional barriers have made it difficult for many children/young people to get a free, appropriate education. Provides an analytical framework to understand how to overcome traditional barriers to full service. Suggests a variety of solutions.

"Making Integration Work: Strategies For Educating Students With Severe Disabilities In Regular Schools"
--Steven J. Taylor

Describes the creative practices and strategies actually being used in states, school districts, individual schools and classrooms across the country to provide integrated schooling for students with severe disabilities.

The preceding publications are available at $1.00 each for postage and handling from the Special Education Resource Center, Syracuse University, 400 Huntington Hall, 150 Marshall Street, Syracuse, N.Y. 13210.